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Articles in Today's Clips

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TOPIC	PAGE
Child Abuse/Neglect/Protection	2-3
Foster Care	4-5
Juvenile Justice	6-7
Unemployment	8



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April is Child Abuse Prevention Month



Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm has declared April 2008 Child Abuse Prevention Month in Michigan, urging residents to take one, deliberate action to protect children.

"Child abuse and neglect hurts everyone," said Ismael Ahmed, director of the Department of Human Services (DHS).

"Prevention is a shared responsibility. We rely on everyone to help protect Michigan's children."

The Children's Trust Fund (CTF) is a statewide, nonprofit organization that is dedicated to preventing child abuse and neglect. Housed administratively within DHS, the trust fund works in partnership with its 72 local councils to serve 82 of Michigan's 83 counties.

Local councils are independent, community-based organizations that identify needs and facilitate collaborative prevention programs for children and families in their community. Many local councils are planning events in their communities to draw attention to the impact of child abuse and neglect.

Michigan taxpayers are encouraged to join in the fight against child abuse and neglect by donating via their tax returns. Individuals can designate a \$5 contribution or more on their Michigan income tax forms. All donations go directly to the Children's Trust Fund.

"If someone wants to help, but can't afford a donation, there is always a need for volunteers," Bearup said. "I encourage everyone to contact their local prevention programs and find out how they can help."

For more information about the CTF and information about local councils, go to www.michigan.gov/ctf.

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Detroit Free Press

April 17, 2008

LINCOLN PARK: Man falsely charged with killing baby gets \$750,000

The 27-year-old man -- charged with killing a baby based on fabricated evidence and later acquitted after spending about two years in jail -- has been awarded \$750,000 in a settlement in a suit he brought against the city police department and one of its detectives.

Matthew Ditzhazy was accused of first-degree felony murder in the January 2005 suffocation of James Nelson, who was living in his home along with the infant's mother. In federal court documents, he alleged that Detective William Santangelo said Ditzhazy confessed to the crime, used that information for a warrant and ignored other leads.

U.S. Magistrate Virginia Morgan approved the \$750,000 settlement Friday.

A Wayne County jury found him not guilty in December 2006 and two months later, Ditzhazy filed a lawsuit, claiming his Fourth and 14th Amendment rights -- to protection against unreasonable search and seizure and to due process and equal protection -- were violated.

Ditzhazy has a job as the head of a local company's receiving department, his lawyer, Ben Gonek, said Wednesday. Santangelo still works for the police department.

Roger Smith, the defendants' attorney, could not immediately be reached for comment.

Foster child's trip to D.C. historical, fun **6-year-old among thousands who welcomed pope to U.S.**

BILL THEOBALD • STATE JOURNAL CORRESPONDENT • APRIL 17, 2008 • FROM LANSING STATE JOURNAL

WASHINGTON - Years from now, Christopher from Lansing will be able to say he witnessed history.

The 6-year-old foster child was among thousands of people who attended the White House reception Wednesday for Pope Benedict XVI. But a few hours after the event, the rambunctious Christopher - whose last name was withheld by social service officials for privacy reasons - seemed more interested in twirling around in U.S. Rep. Mike Rogers' black leather armchair at Rogers' office near the Capitol.

During the ceremony, Christopher found enough space on the crowded South Lawn to dance to the regal marches performed by a Marine band, waving his small American flag.

"Like that one," he said, pointing to the large flag behind Rogers' desk.

Like most of those attending the reception, Christopher relied on a large video screen to watch the pope and President Bush.

"He didn't have his hat," Christopher noted of the pope.

Christopher's friendliness won him his spot at the reception. He was chosen by Andrea Seyka, acting chief executive officer at St. Vincent Catholic Charities, and his intensive foster care therapist, Stephanie Gonzalez. The agency was invited by Rogers, a Republican from Brighton, to attend the ceremony because of its work with children.

"It was an amazing experience," Gonzalez said of the colorful ceremony.

The pope was welcomed by a crowd that included Catholic bishops and cardinals in purple and red, and was entertained by a red-uniformed Revolutionary War fife and drum corps. State, U.S. and yellow papal flags lined the steps of the White House behind the lectern.

Seyka said the trio from Lansing spent Tuesday walking around the Mall area near the Capitol.

"We ate ice cream," Christopher recalled with a smile. It was the first visit to Washington for all three.

"It's kind of like being in awe," Seyka said. "To watch Christopher's face, it was great. As Christopher gets older, it will be more important for him."

Meanwhile, Christopher was feeling pretty important. Wednesday's schedule included an interview with a Lansing station at the House television studio, Christopher's third TV appearance in recent days.

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Hearing delayed in grandma's poisoning

By Dennis Pelham
Daily Telegram
Wed Apr 16, 2008, 09:39 AM EDT

ADRIAN, Mich. -

A hearing in the case of a teenage girl accused of poisoning her grandmother with morphine in 2006 was adjourned again Tuesday in Lenawee County District Court.

Kristina Lynn Adkins, 15, was returned to the Maurice Spear Campus to await a court appearance now scheduled for April 30. She remained in a holding cell while attorneys met for an hour Tuesday morning before announcing the adjournment to family members waiting in the courtroom. Relatives who are divided over the girl's prosecution met in separate groups with prosecutors and defense attorneys to hear explanations of the legal proceedings.

Adkins has been held at the county youth facility since mid-December without bond. She was arrested after an investigation started by Lenawee County Sheriff's Department detectives after the Aug. 1, 2006, death of Virginia Bentley, 53, at her Rollin Township home. Autopsy results showed she died from an allergic reaction to morphine sulfate, a prescription drug used by her husband, Ireland "Buzz" Bentley Jr.

Investigators allege the girl knew her grandmother was highly allergic to morphine and mixed it with Virginia Bentley's medications on July 28, 29 and 30 before the fatal dose was taken on Aug. 1, 2006.

No motive for poisoning her grandmother has been offered by Lenawee County prosecutors.

Adkins was living with the Bentleys at the time.

Court-appointed attorneys Michael McFarland and Anna Marie Anzalone

said they are still deciding whether to have a preliminary examination in district court. The hearing would require the prosecution to show evidence that Virginia Bentley was murdered and that there is sufficient evidence against Adkins to try her for the crime.

Anzalone said she and McFarland are to meet with prosecutors to discuss some procedural issues in what is still a juvenile court case. Adkins cannot be prosecuted as an adult because she was only 13 at the time of the alleged murder, but the Lenawee County prosecutor's office moved to have the case handled following adult court rules.

That required a preliminary examination in district court before it goes to a trial in juvenile court.

McFarland said the hearing was called off Tuesday because the forensic pathologist who conducted the autopsy was not available to testify and because transcripts of several hours of tape-recorded police interviews with Adkins were delivered to the defense only two days ago. McFarland said he has not yet had a chance to go through the 150 pages of transcripts in detail and discuss them with Adkins.

Adkins was last in court on March 17 when she was ruled mentally competent for trial after a psychological evaluation requested by the defense in January.

Weekly jobless claims rise more than expected

BY MARTIN CRUTSINGER • ASSOCIATED PRESS • APRIL 17, 2008

WASHINGTON — The number of newly laid off workers filing claims for unemployment benefits last week increased by more than had been expected, indicating more pressure coming from the weak economy.

The Labor Department said Thursday that applications for unemployment benefits rose to 372,000, an increase of 17,000 from the previous week. That was higher than the gain of 12,000 that many economists had expected. The four-week average for claims was 376,000, down only slightly from 376,750, the previous week.

Aside from the period in the fall of 2005 after Hurricane Katrina hit, the four-week average for claims has risen to levels last seen in 2003 when the country was mired in a long jobless recovery after the 2001 recession.